

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

FES 05-03

The Coteau Properties Company

Federal Coal Lease by Application NDM 91535

For

West Mine Area, Freedom Mine, Mercer County, North Dakota

Prepared by

The Bureau of Land Management, North Dakota Field Office

In Cooperation with

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement,
Denver, Colorado

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Abstract

Lead Agency: Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior

Cooperating Agency: Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

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Proposed Action: The Coteau Properties Company applied for 5,571 acres of federal coal beneath private surface in Mercer County, North Dakota.

Abstract: This EIS analyzes the environmental consequences of three federal coal management alternatives. The analysis was based on resource issues and concerns identified during previous coal leasing analyses and public scoping conducted for this application. Potential concerns include impacts to air quality, water resources, soils, land use, vegetation, wildlife, cultural resources, environmental justice and socioeconomics. Analysis of cumulative impacts addresses ongoing surface mining at the Freedom Mine, Mercer County, North Dakota.

The Proposed Action (Alternative A) considers leasing tracts as requested in the lease application. The Coteau Properties Company filed an application to acquire federal coal as maintenance tracts under federal coal regulations at 43 CFR 3425, Leasing By Application. Under Alternative A, the BLM would lease the requested 5,571 acres of federal coal beneath private surface. The lease tracts would be subject to standard and special lease stipulations. The coal (an estimated 93 million tons of federal lignite) would complement reserves of the Freedom Mine.

The No Action Alternative (B) would reject the coal lease application. Federal tracts would not be leased although existing private and state leases at the Freedom Mine would be developed according to approved mining and reclamation plans (ND PSC Surface Coal Mining Permit NACT-201).

Alternative C (Modified Leasing) considers holding a competitive sale of federal coal, leasing 5,334 acres, and providing added measures to protect and preserve cultural resources in the proposed permit area.

Alternative C is the preferred alternative.